

11th July—D + 1

At 0230, the *Sirius* and *Dido* were detached to proceed ahead to Bone. An executive signal from the Commander-in-Chief (received at 1016) advancing operation "Fracture" by 24 hours, was delayed 40 minutes in decyphering. In consequence action was not taken until 1100, when course was altered to 080° and speed worked up to 27 knots to compensate for the delay. The cruisers were recalled and the *Isis*, unable to maintain sufficient speed was ordered to Bone with instructions to rejoin at a rendezvous at 0600/12. At 1545 the cruisers rejoined; while passing Group "D" which was engaged in sweeping, one of the corvettes dropped a depth charge and Force "Z" made an emergency turn. About 1700, as slight engine troubles in the battleships caused temporary reductions of speed, the Commander-in-Chief was informed that the battleships would be half an hour and the cruisers a quarter of an hour behind the time ordered for the bombardment, 0125, 12th July.

At 2200, the *Sirius* and *Dido* were detached to bombard Marsala.

58. OPERATION "FRACTURE"

Operation "Fracture" was planned as a diversion, with the object of creating the impression that a descent would be made on the west coast of Sicily. It was hoped, that the effect would be to pin down or at least delay the movement of enemy reinforcements to the actual area of assault on the south-eastern corner of the island.

12th July—D + 2

The battleships' approach course ran through two datum positions: A in 37° 45' N., 9° 46' E., and B in 38° 11½' N., 12° 10' E., which was reached at 0123. The 27th Destroyer Division ahead of the battleships, closed to within 9,000 yards of Levanzo Island, while the 28th Division acted as a screen.

Bombardment of Levanzo Island

At 0139, speed was reduced to 16 knots, and the *Howe* opened fire at 13,500 yards with starshell at 0145, the *King George V* following suit at 0146. The targets selected were three batteries and hutments in the north-east corner of Levanzo Island, which was fringed with steep cliffs. The target area was 1,500 yards in depth, height allowed 300 feet, the three batteries being calculated to be in transit when Cape Grosso bore 165°. Nine rounds per 5.25-in. gun with flashless propellant and H.E. shell were fired by the battleships. The destroyers opened direct fire very shortly after 0146, with ranges based on radar information. Their salvos were seen to burst on the cliff face and top of the hill close to the northern H.A./L.A. battery.¹

The majority of the battleships' salvos appeared to burst on the left side of the hill behind Cape Grosso, probably below the battery sites. The bombardment ended at 0149, when course was altered to 055°. After the destroyers had turned away, the batteries on Levanzo Island opened a spasmodic fire. Some shells fell close, but none of the ships were hit.

¹ The ammunition expended was:—

<i>Jervis</i>	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	59 rounds.
<i>Arrow</i>	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	29 rounds.
<i>Paladin</i>	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	40 rounds.

Bombardment of Trapani

The second phase of the operation was the bombardment of Trapani. The target selected for the 14-in. guns was Trapani town to the eastward of the harbour, an area of 3,000 yards from east to west with a depth of 1,000 yards. For the 5.25-in. guns the target was Trapani harbour including Colomboa Island.

The *Howe* opened fire at 0152½ with 14-in. H.E. shell, followed by the *King George V* at 0153½, the initial range being 23,000 yards, bearing 122° for both ships. The 5.25-in. guns opened fire shortly after the 14-in., when their target range was 21,000 yards, bearing 127°. The *Howe* fired 17 salvos from her 14-in. guns, and the *King George V* fired 39 rounds. The majority of the salvos were estimated to have fallen in the target area, the *Howe* reported observing "a few 14-in. shell bursts," the *King George V* "about a dozen". Cordite smoke completely obscured the 5.25-in. target area and the blinding effect from all guns was most marked. When firing ceased at 0200, course was altered to 290°.

During the approach and throughout the bombardments a large V-shaped illumination was visible on the land near Punta Barone. This, it was conjectured may have been intended as some sort of decoy for the R.A.F.

After turning to the retirement course, the destroyers dropped a number of delay action devices consisting of depth charges, smoke floats and snowflake rockets. These were intended to prolong the period of disturbance and attract the attention of any E-Boats or aircraft. Apparently the first object was achieved, for both searchlights and guns continued to be active for a considerable time.

The following points from the report of Captain Woodhouse are summarized:—

- The bombardments were carried out without observation, and therefore great accuracy could not be expected.
- Time for preparation of orders was very short.

Navigational requirements, arrangements of destroyer movements to provide adequate screening against E-Boats, measures to be taken if enemy interference necessitated alteration of plans, were all matters of much concern. In the circumstances insufficient attention was paid to the selection of the 14-in. target areas. The H.A./L.A. batteries to the south and north of Trapani would have been better targets and sufficient accuracy could have been attained to support the idea that a landing might follow.

Captain Crawford (*Jervis*) suggested that, as Italian batteries only fire when ships cease bombarding, the rear retiring destroyer should continue intermittent fire during the withdrawal until out of range.¹

Bombardment of Marsala

After parting company the *Sirius* and *Dido* proceeded towards Marsala. Flashes from an air attack in progress were observed during the approach. The bombardment course selected ran between the positions (a) 37° 46' N., 12° 13' E., and (b) 37° 41.8' N., 12° 15.3' E., approximately on the 100 fathom line within effective range.

¹ The *Howe's* expenditure of ammunition was not stated, that of *King George V* was 14-in. 39 rounds, 5.25-in. 338 rounds.

The second disaster occurred at 1000, 4th August, when the S.S. *Fort La Montée* was set on fire by the spontaneous ignition of smoke generators. After a change of wind the fire gained and two hours later she was towed clear of the harbour. H.M.S. *Arrow* went alongside her to assist fire parties from the *Howe* and *King George V*. At about 1540, the *Fort La Montée* blew up, setting fire to the *Arrow* and causing heavy casualties. Debris from the explosion for some time prevented the seriously damaged *Arrow* from being freed from the wreck and many gallant attempts by British and American volunteers to rescue several men trapped below decks in the *Arrow* were unsuccessful. The after part of the *Fort La Montée* remained afloat until it was sunk by gunfire from H.M. Submarine *Saracen*. The fires in the *Arrow* were not got under control until 2130.

<i>Sirius</i>	..	..	..	..	..	456 rounds.
<i>Dido</i>	..	..	..	..	..	499 rounds 5·25-in. H.E.

While on patrol in bright moonlight, steering courses up and down moon, Force "Q" sighted and engaged low-flying aircraft from time to time. At 0206, when off Cape Spartivento the Force was attacked by six torpedo-bombers flying low, probably about 50 ft. Two torpedoes were seen from the *Euryalus* and the *Quail* reported that one passed within 100 yards.

At 0715, Force "Q" rejoined the 2nd Division and at 1215 was detached to fuel at Malta.

When two unidentified aircraft closed the 1st Division at 0427 from the northward, the *Indomitable* flew off four Seafires to intercept, one was engaged in a chase of 70 miles during which one Seafire pilot baled out and was lost.

At 0754, a reconnaissance report stated that two battleships, a cruiser and a destroyer had been sighted steering southward from Spezia. Steam was raised for full speed and by order from the Commander-in-Chief, Force "H" began to concentrate to the north-eastward of Malta. The report, however, proved to be a false alarm and the 1st Division was ordered to Malta. Force "Q" which had just arrived off the Grand Harbour was recalled at 1750 and rejoined the 2nd Division after dark.

15th July—D + 5

At 1700, Force "Q" was detached to patrol south and south-east of Cape Spartivento. A Ju. 88 reconnaissance aircraft at 1725 reported the 2nd Division.

The 1st Division with the *Aurora*, *Penelope* and eight destroyers sailed from Malta at 1800 to relieve the 2nd Division. Information derived from signals indicated that a bombardment of the Catania area would probably be ordered during the following day. Accordingly course was shaped to reach a position about 60' eastward of Cape Passero at 0600/16.

Before dark, the *Indomitable* was stationed astern of the *Rodney* in order to facilitate flying operations. Two hours after sunset the Force was formed according to Cruising Diagram No. 23, with one cruiser stationed at the head of the column and the other astern of the *Indomitable*.

The F.O. "H" deeming the submarine menace to be greater than that of air attack ordered a night A.S.V. air search ahead of the Fleet. For this six Albacores were flown off the *Indomitable* at 2230 with orders to return at 0200/16, meanwhile the Force maintained the second degree of A.A. readiness, zig-zagging at 16 knots speed.

60. H.M.S. "INDOMITABLE" TORPEDOED BY AN ENEMY AIRCRAFT

(Ref. Plan 16)

16th July—D + 6

At 0020, the *Nelson's* radar obtained an echo bearing 057°, eight miles "probably aircraft" and about two minutes later the air defence officer reported an aircraft in sight 2½ miles ahead. He had already brought the armament to immediate notice and given orders to open a blind T/A barrage, but on sighting the aircraft, being doubtful of its identity, ordered "Check Fire".

The initial radar report did not reach the Admiral's bridge, where the first intimation was the sighting report at about 0023. Immediately afterwards the *Nelson* opened fire and noise prevented transmission of a manoeuvring signal. In any case it would have been too late as the *Indomitable* had already been hit by a torpedo.

The *Indomitable's* report states, that from 2100/15 onwards numerous single aircraft had been detected, which, after closing within 10 to 15 miles, withdrew towards Sicily or Malta. One was observed patrolling for an hour, others were plotted outside 28 miles. Between 2239/15 and 0015/16, surface ships which were plotted moving about 15' off, may have been Force "K".

The weather conditions at 0020 were described as :

Moon, one day before full, bearing 200°, altitude 30°, moonset 0430.

Wind ENE., very light ; sea calm ; very high visibility.

The first warning in the *Indomitable* was the noise of an aircraft's engine to port. The general impression of those on watch was that an Albacore in trouble was returning to land on. After a few seconds interval the aircraft was heard to "open up" and was sighted on the port beam and then flew over the fore part of the flight deck, apparently climbing. A signalman reported "she's dropped something" and the officer of the watch ordered "Hard-a-port. Full ahead." Before this attempt at avoiding action could take effect, about 15 seconds after the first alarm, a torpedo struck the ship on her port side abreast the boiler room. The *Indomitable* did not open fire on the aircraft, whose identity it is stated was not established. The position of the attack was reported by the F.O. "H" as 36° 22' N., 16° 08' E. (52' eastward of Cape Passero).

The *Indomitable* listing some 12° to port reduced speed and altered course northward directly away from the moon. After righting the ship by counter-flooding it was found that the internal damage was confined to the port boiler room and adjacent compartments, and that P.2 pom-pom had been put out of action. The casualties were two stoker P.O.s and five stokers killed.

On seeing the *Indomitable* dropping astern, the F.O. "H" ordered the *Piorun* (P) and *Echo* to join her and when the *Indomitable* was seen to have turned right round, the course of the Fleet was altered at 0400 to follow her. While executing this manoeuvre, radar reports of aircraft were received, bearing 015°, 8 miles and 345°, 3½ miles. A sector barrage fired by all ships effectually drove off these aircraft.

The *Ilex* was ordered to join the *Indomitable* and the Fleet manoeuvred to bring the *Indomitable* inside the screen, which was accomplished by 0350. During this period, the Albacore aircraft flew round near the Fleet before they understood that they were to return to Malta.

At 0246 the *Indomitable* reported her maximum speed at 14 knots and that it was necessary to return to port for examination and shoring her bulkheads. Later to prevent increase of flooding her speed was reduced to 11 knots, and she took station astern of the 1st Division.

At 0730, when a rendezvous was effected with the 2nd Division, the *Indomitable* joined it to proceed to Malta while the *Formidable* joined the 1st Division which then proceeded north-eastward.

In his report on the circumstances of the torpedoing of the *Indomitable* the F.O. "H" admitted that the Force was caught napping, though constant stress had been laid on the importance of opening fire on aircraft in a position to menace the Fleet, particularly at night. The following is a summary of the reasons why, in his opinion, fire was not opened :—

- Most of the ships, especially those from the Home Fleet, had not experienced air attack at sea for a long time.
- Four days immunity from air attack while within comparatively close range of enemy air bases had tended to reduce the degree of alertness.
- The almost continuous presence of friendly aircraft, few of which showed I.F.F., promoted a false sense of security in the minds of the air defence officers. This, in conjunction with the knowledge that the *Indomitable's* Albacores were out on A.S.V. search, seems to have increased fatally, a feeling of uncertainty and hesitancy.

The Commander-in-Chief's comments are summarized below :—

- (a) The failure of the numerous modern radar sets to pick up the aircraft in sufficient time was disappointing.
- (b) The ships appear to have been lulled into a sense of false security.
- (c) Although strategic requirements may entail the acceptance of risk of damage we must not necessarily be prepared to accept damage itself.
- (d) An additional reason for the sense of false security was that many friendly aircraft operating over the sea did not have their I.F.F. operating correctly. Many unnecessary interceptions were made by fleet fighters on this account.
- (e) The above reasons are the causes of the inexcusable failure of the ships to open fire. An aircraft in a position to menace the fleet must be instantly engaged unless it has identified itself in the most positive manner.

61. H.M.S. "CLEOPATRA" TORPEDOED BY ENEMY SUBMARINE

16th July

Meanwhile, Force "Q" (*Euryalus*, *Cleopatra*, *Quilliam*, *Quail*) had on this night extended its patrol further to the north-east. It was only once menaced by low flying aircraft which were engaged as it patrolled in single line ahead towards, or away from the moon at 24 knots, the destroyers prolonging the line astern. At 0500 the destroyers formed screen and speed was increased to 26 knots. At 0617, in 37° 13' N., 16° 00' E., the *Cleopatra* was hit by a torpedo, apparently from a submarine, on her starboard side abreast "A" boiler room. At the time the force was carrying out zig-zag No. 11 at half-time intervals. Weather conditions were : sea smooth ; wind, Force 2 ; visibility good.

The *Quilliam* and *Quail* commenced to search for the submarine while the *Euryalus* zig-zagged at high speed outside torpedo range ahead of the *Cleopatra*. At 0635 the *Cleopatra* still remaining stopped, the destroyers, not being in contact, were recalled and ordered to circle round her and drop occasional depth charges. The *Euryalus* remained in company to afford A.A. protection and ordered one destroyer to prepare to tow. At 0650 the *Cleopatra* reporting "B" unit working was ordered to steer for Syracuse. By 0800 she was making 10 knots with the *Euryalus* zig-zagging astern and the destroyers screening ahead. When the tug *Oriana* was sighted approaching from Syracuse, the *Cleopatra* was ordered to steer for Malta with the tug following close astern. At 0900 the *Eggesford*, *Seaham* and *Poole* arrived and joined the screen. A Baltimore aircraft from Malta arrived about the same time.

At 1000 the *Euryalus* reported that the *Cleopatra* was not in immediate danger. The *Newfoundland* (Flag of R.A. 15th C.S.) was sighted to starboard at 1030, and shortly afterwards when Force "H" hove in sight on the port bow, the *Euryalus* reported favourably on the *Cleopatra's* progress. The *Euryalus* entered the Grand Harbour at 1630 followed by the *Cleopatra* and escort half an hour later. The casualties in the *Cleopatra* were 21 officers and men killed or missing and 23 wounded were sent to hospital.

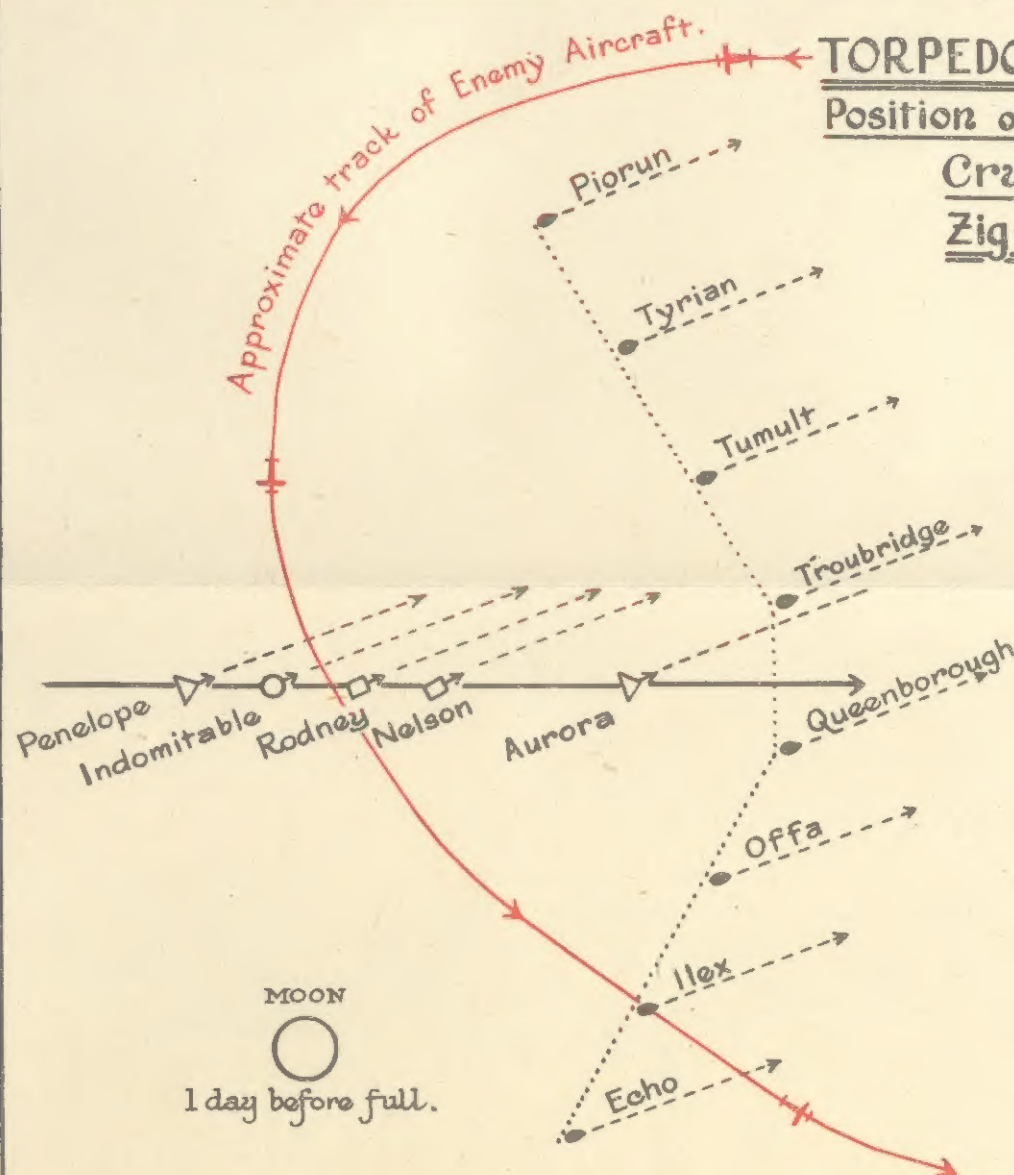
PLAN 16


TORPEDOING of H.M.S. INDOMITABLE

Position of Force "H" at 0020, 16th July, 1943

Cruising Disposition N° 23.

Zig-Zag N° 44. M.L.A., 090°.



MOON

 1 day before full.



0 1,000 2,000 3,000 4,000
 SCALE IN YARDS

Ref: M011354/43.

T.S.D/H.S.(430)

The F.O. "H", on receiving information of the torpedoing of the *Cleopatra*, had altered course to close her with the intention of providing fighter protection, but by 0930 it was apparent that this was unnecessary. Force "H" then steered northward until 1130, when, not having received any request for a bombardment, course was altered towards Malta. At 1215, as the Commander-in-Chief signalled that a bombardment might still be required, courses and speeds were adjusted accordingly. At 1420, the order to bombard Catania was received. The *Tartar*, *Oakley* and *Lauderdale* joined the flag at 1530, and the *Formidable*, screened by them, was detached to Malta. The F.O. Sy.'s signal at 1704, that the bombardment was postponed was confirmed at 1855 by the Commander-in-Chief and the 1st Division steered for Malta. When passing Cape Passero two A/S contacts were reported, both "non-sub." During the night six blind barrages were fired at unidentified aircraft.

17th July—D + 7

The 1st Division anchored off the breakwater at 0800, while the 2nd Division was leaving the Grand Harbour for Marsaxlokk. At 0930, the 1st Division entered the Grand Harbour. While entering Marsaxlokk at 0916 the *Valiant* fouled the anti-torpedo boom with her port propeller. A signal from the Commander-in-Chief received at 1215, ordered the 2nd Division to sail at 1200 to bombard Catania. The *Valiant* on reporting being clear of the boom at 1316 was ordered to Q berth while the *Warspite* (R.A. "H") *Faulknor*, *Fury*, *Eclipse*, *Inglefield*, *Intrepid*, *Queen Olga* (G), *Raider* and *Petard* proceeded to sea at 1320. The *Euryalus* joined five minutes later and took station astern of the *Warspite*. During the afternoon the *Warspite*'s steering gear gave trouble and the resultant loss of time had to be made good by increasing speed. At 1750, the *Laforey* and *Loyal* joined the destroyer screen.

62. BOMBARDMENT OF CATANIA BY THE "WARSPITE"

17th July

(Ref. Plan 14)

At 1840, the *Warspite* was in position 180° Cape Molini Light 10.45 miles, steering north at 15 knots. Her objective was the northern half of Catania town clear of the port area and railway station. The target selected formed a rectangle 1,000 yards by 800 yards in extent, whose central point was the barracks, with other military quarters in the north-east and south-west corners.

At 1844, the *Warspite* opened fire in position 141° Sciarra Biscari Lt., 13,000 yards, the range to the centre of the target area being 14,700 yards. Salvos were fired at minute intervals, a procedure which while prolonging the bombardment, facilitated accurate application of range and bearing corrections. After A and B turrets had fired eight two-gun salvos, course was altered at 1850 to 020° and all turrets fired seven four-gun salvos until 1858, when X and Y turrets fired six two-gun salvos. The bombardment ended at 1903 when course was altered to 150°. Speed had been increased to 20 knots at 1855, when the *Raider* reported sighting a submarine. At 1859, three F.W.190s, flew out from the land southward of Catania, passed astern and then up the starboard side about 6,000 yards away to seaward. Flying very low and extremely fast they were hotly engaged with 6-in., 4-in., and pom-poms, but did not attack. Fighter aircraft sent after them failed to intercept.

The range and distance inland of the target area combined with the bearing of the sun at low altitude over the area prevented observation of results in detail, but the salvos appeared to burst in the target area.

The minimum bombarding range was 11,400 yards. Only one gun missed in the 21 salvos fired, the total expenditure was 55 rounds of 15-in. H.E.

An enemy battery, probably a combined C.D. and A.A. battery of 3-in. or 4-in. calibre guns, opened fire at 1847 during the bombardment but none of its salvos fell near the *Warspite*. This battery, from which flashes were seen from three guns, situated near a chemical works north of Guardia, was engaged by the *Intrepid* at ranges of from 7,600 yards to 11,000 yards. The *Intrepid* expended 152 rounds of 4.7-in. H.E.D.A. and reported that the target area was well covered and that possibly one gun was silenced. The enemy's fire was wide for line and persistently 500 yards out for range, only one shell falling near the *Intrepid*. The *Lafarey* also engaged an H.A./L.A. battery and at 1858 the *Lookout* shot down one of four enemy fighter aircraft flying low over the sea.

The Rear-Admiral, Force "H", remarked, that the bombardment was well planned and executed. To reach the bombarding position the *Warspite* made good 23½ knots with paravanes streamed over a period of about 5 hours, a performance reflecting great credit on her engine room department.¹

The F.O. "H" considered, that the moral effect of the bombardment was probably greater than the material effect.

At 1923, the *Warspite*, *Euryalus* and *Eclipse* fired pom-poms at their own fighter escort. A blind barrage was fired to starboard at 2115 when aircraft closing—215°, 3 miles, very low—were reported by radar.

18th July—D + 8

At 0035, a blind barrage was fired at aircraft closing in to two miles. The force entered Marsaxlokk at 0635.

63. FORCE "Q" OPERATIONS. SOUTHERN ITALY

(Ref. Plan 17)

At 1300, 18th July the *Aurora*, *Troubridge*, *Tumult*, *Offa*, *Piorun* (P), *Ilex* and *Echo* left Malta to carry out a night sweep off the south coast of Italy. The force passed six miles off Cape Spartivento and continued as far as Cape Rizzuto before altering course to the southward at 0115, 19th July. Single unidentified aircraft which approached the force from the southward on five occasions were driven off. At 0425, the destroyers engaged an aircraft which apparently jettisoned a torpedo before being brought down in flames about a mile from the *Ilex*, which rescued a German officer and three airmen. Several men of the *Ilex*'s B gun were injured by one of her Oerlikon shells exploding on hitting the fore topmast stay. The *Troubridge* (D.4), *Tumult*, *Offa* and *Piorun* were detached during the forenoon to search for a submarine reported by air reconnaissance, the remainder of the force returned to Malta.

By 19th July, the first phase of operation "Husky" the landing of the 7th and 8th Armies was accomplished. The Flag Officer, Force "H", from 26th July became Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean (Malta), responsible for the general conduct of operations in the area south and east of Sicily and west of 20° E. with the exception of the Western Task Force area.

¹ The C-in-C. signalled: "Operation well carried out. There is no question when the old lady lifts her skirts, she can run."

Bombardment of Crotone

At 1300, 20th July, Force "Q" (*Aurora*, *Penelope*, *Troubridge*, *Tumult*, *Quilliam*, *Piorun* (P), *Offa*, and *Petard*) sailed from Malta to sweep along the Calabrian coast and bombard Crotone.

The targets were allocated as follows:—

Aurora.—Chemical works north of the town.

Penelope.—Harbour area west of the breakwater to a depth of 600 yards.

Troubridge and *Piorun*.—Northern part of the *Penelope*'s area.

Offa and *Petard*.—Battery on Cape Colonne until silenced, then the harbour area.

At 0153/21, Force "Q" steering 330°, at 25 knots in single line ahead, passed through a position 085°, Crotone Light six miles, and opened fire. Though the *Aurora* and *Penelope* fired starshell over the harbour, spotting the fall of shot proved to be difficult. The firing was however, considered satisfactory as before commencing accurate fixes by bearings of Cape Colonne had been obtained and tracer indicated that the line was correct. After five minutes, the *Aurora* increasing to 28 knots turned to the eastward and ceased fire.¹

When the ships opened fire a few bursts of A.A. shell were seen over the target, but apparently the enemy gun crews retired under cover as they did not fire again until the ships were withdrawing to the south-east.

At 0215, when course was altered to 180°, a radar echo obtained was suspected to be from E-Boats, but a search with starshell revealed nothing.

After the bombardment, an air raid on Crotone landing ground was observed to be in progress. Possibly this raid prevented air retaliation, for no aircraft came within four miles of the force during the night. Force "Q" arrived at Malta at 1600.

28th/29th July

The *Aurora*, *Penelope* and six destroyers sailed from Malta on 28th July to carry out a sweep off the East Calabrian coast. The road, railway and bridges on the toe of Italy, south of Locri, were bombarded, several small fires being started.

31st July/1st August. Calabrian Coast Operations

(Ref. Plan 17)

The *Sirius*, *Euryalus*, *Dido*, escorted by the *Jervis*, *Panther*, *Pathfinder* and *Paladin* sailed from Bone for operations against the Italian mainland. At 0030, 1st August, the railway bridge over the River Oliva was bombarded, but it was impossible to estimate the damage. The *Euryalus* and *Pathfinder* bombarded the harbour of Vibo Valentia in the Gulf of San Eufemia. Very slight opposition was offered by the shore defences. After completing the operation the *Euryalus* proceeded to Malta and the remainder of the squadron returned to Bone.

¹ Ammunition expended was:—

<i>Aurora</i>	..	..	..	..	..	..	72 rounds.
<i>Quilliam</i>	..	..	..	..	..	..	140 rounds.
<i>Penelope</i>	..	..	..	..	..	..	68 rounds.
<i>Piorun</i> (P)	..	..	..	..	..	..	160 rounds.
<i>Troubridge</i>	..	..	..	..	..	..	99 rounds.
<i>Offa</i>	..	..	..	..	..	..	130 rounds.
<i>Tumult</i>	..	..	..	..	..	..	88 rounds.
<i>Petard</i>	..	..	..	..	..	..	160 rounds.

As a diversion to the above operation, the *Aurora*, *Penelope*, *Laforey* and *Lookout* sailed from Augusta to rendezvous with the *Faulknor* (D.8), *Loyal*, *Raider* and *Inglefield*, from Malta and bombard Crotone. The bombardment was carried out successfully at 0200, two patrol craft encountered were sunk and two big fires started in the harbour area. Only one battery replied, firing three fairly accurate rounds.

9th/10th August

Force "Q" (*Aurora*, *Sirius*, *Dido*, *Penelope*, *Jervis*, *Pathfinder*, *Paladin* and *Panther*) sailed from Bizerta, 9th August, to carry out Operation "Annoyance." This was successfully performed, the *Aurora*, *Penelope* and two destroyers bombarding targets at Castellamare di Stabia in the Gulf of Naples, while the *Sirius*, *Dido* and two destroyers made a sweep towards Paola. The *Aurora* reported that the only results observed of her bombardment were a few white flashes. The Force returned to Bizerta.

Disposition for Nightly Sweeps off the Italian Coast

Commencing on 12th August, new dispositions were made for the employment of Force "Q." Nightly sweeps, to intercept enemy coastal shipping by two cruisers and two destroyers would be made in the area between Licosia Point and the Gulf of Eufemia to 38° 50' N. Each division of Force "Q" would operate on two successive nights returning for the day to Palermo for refuelling. A.S.V. aircraft from Malta would co-operate.

The *Aurora* (C.S. 12), *Penelope*, *Jervis* and *Paladin* proceeded from Bizerta to Palermo on 12th August, and carried out the first sweep and bombarded the harbour of Vibo Valentia successfully, the whole harbour area being set on fire and a coaster blown up.

Night Sweep and Bombardment of Scalea, 15th August

At 1000/14th August the *Sirius*, *Dido*, *Penn* and *Panther* sailed from Bizerta to carry out a sweep between Paola and the Gulf of Eufemia. While on passage orders were received from the Commander-in-Chief to bombard Scalea. The sweep off the Italian coast was without result. At midnight the *Penn* was detached to search for a southbound vessel reported by a co-operating aircraft to be off Cape Licosia.

Scalea was bombarded between 0130 and 0145, 15th August, by the *Sirius*, *Dido*, *Panther*, at ranges between 7,000 and 9,000 yards.

The town standing on a hill was easily identified, and starshell illuminated its details. The targets allocated were:—

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| <i>Sirius</i> | Northern half of town and shipping in the bay. |
| <i>Dido</i> | Southern half of town. |
| <i>Panther</i> | (1) Any enemy taking offensive action. |
| | (2) Shipping in the bay. |
| | (3) The town, in the absence of (1) and (2). |

Area shoots were carried out, bursts being observed within the areas until dust obscured the fall of shot.¹ There was no opposition and results were unspectacular except for one considerable electrical fire and three explosions. The *Penn*, having sighted nothing, rejoined at 0300, and the Force proceeded to Palermo.

¹Ammunition expenditure:—

<i>Sirius</i>	5.25-in. : 461 H.E., starshell 38.
<i>Dido</i>	5.25-in. : 348 H.E., 92 S.A.P., starshell 18.
<i>Panther</i>	4-in. : 98 H.E., 70 S.A.P., starshell 48.

Night Sweep and Encounter with Enemy Vessels. Bombardment of Vibo Valentia, 16th August

At 1815, 15th August, Force "Q" (*Sirius*, *Dido*, *Penn* and *Panther*) left Palermo to carry out a bombardment of Vibo Valentia. The Italian Hospital Ship *Aquilea* encountered at 2230 was permitted to proceed without being boarded. On approaching the Italian coast about 2300, extensive flare dropping was seen from aircraft. No notice having been received of this activity, it was uncertain whether the flares indicated targets, or were of enemy origin.

At 0020, 16th August, after altering course to the southward parallel to the coast, the *Penn* reported "enemy in sight," two miles to port. All ships opened fire on a coastal convoy consisting of a lighter (possibly a barge or landing craft) and two escort craft (either R-Boats or M.L.s). One escort was quickly sunk by the *Penn* and the other blew up soon afterwards. The lighter was hit repeatedly, until, as spotting became difficult, the *Panther* was ordered to close and finish her off and the other ships to cease fire.¹ Starshell revealed no signs of the enemy craft which had certainly been sunk. The escort vessels replied ineffectively in the three minutes that elapsed before their destruction. After the engagement the *Panther* and *Dido* obtained surface echoes to the northward possibly of E-Boats which apparently retired at high speed as no signs of them were seen when starshell were fired in their direction.

The bombardment of Vibo Valentia town and harbour was carried out at ranges between 7,000 and 9,000 yards from 0215 to 0230. The targets included a warehouse, a factory and the railway station area, but no definite results could be seen. No shipping was visible in the harbour, a few fires started by previous attacks were still burning in the town.² Desultory enemy fire was observed but there were no splashes near any of the ships. In addition to the satisfaction of inflicting damage on the enemy without suffering either damage or casualties, Force "Q" witnessed an eruption of Stromboli and a total eclipse of the moon before reaching Bizerta.

16th/17th August

Force "Q" (*Penelope*, *Euryalus*, *Jervis*, *Paladin*) swept during the night as far as the Italian mainland without sighting anything.

17th/18th August

The night sweep by Force "Q" (*Penelope*, *Euryalus*, *Jervis*, *Paladin*) was uneventful. During the early hours of 18th August Scalea was again bombarded, the Force firing 387 rounds. Smoke laid by the enemy prevented observation of results.

¹Ammunition expenditure:—

<i>Sirius</i>	5.25-in. : 20 H.E., 97 S.A.P., starshell 28.
<i>Dido</i>	5.25-in. : 20 H.E., 77 S.A.P., starshell 20.
<i>Panther</i>	4-in. : 31 H.E., 12 starshell.
<i>Penn</i>	4-in. : 209 H.E.

²Ammunition expenditure:—

<i>Sirius</i>	5.25-in. : 300 H.E., 100 S.A.P., starshell 23.
<i>Dido</i>	5.25-in. : 322 H.E., 101 S.A.P., 36 starshell.
<i>Panther</i>	4-in. : 84 H.E., 34 S.A.P.
<i>Penn</i>	4-in. : 309 H.E.

Destruction of Enemy Landing Craft, 19th August

At 1000, 18th August the *Aurora*, *Dido*, *Penn* and *Panther* sailed from Bizerta on a routine sweep of the Gulf of Policastro. Passing north of Ustica the Force swept round the Gulf of Policastro some 3-4 miles off shore and steered towards Scalea. At 0152, 19th August, a number of barges or landing craft were sighted steering north approximately 2 miles from Scalea. The Force opened fire setting two of the enemy craft on fire, while a third, surrounded by shell bursts, disappeared from the radar screen.

At 0205, two more landing craft sighted further to the southward were engaged without apparent result. The *Penn* and *Panther* were detached to finish off both groups, a task they accomplished most effectively. The *Penn* sinking three and the *Panther* two of the enemy craft.

Meanwhile the *Aurora* and *Dido* had steered south at 15 knots keeping outside the 100 fathom line. At 0228 two more barges on being sighted made straight for the shore as soon as starshell were fired. The cruisers followed and opened fire at 4,000 yards range. One barge was set on fire and the other was last seen with her bridge awash.

These craft which were about the size of an L.C.I. made no reply. Men were observed jumping overboard from them and it is possible that more than seven were sunk. After completing this successful sweep, the *Dido*, *Penn* and *Panther* were detached to Palermo at 0630, the *Aurora* proceeding to Bizerta.

At 1830/19, the *Dido*, *Penn* and *Panther* joined the *Sirius* at a rendezvous off Palermo to carry out a sweep between Cape Bonifati and the Gulf of Eufemia. Nothing was sighted during the sweep, except a number of aircraft which were apparently bombing the coast road near Paola. En route an unsuccessful search was made for survivors of two aircraft reported to have crashed. At 0210 the Force altered course to return to Bizerta.

This operation was the last definitely associated with Operation "Husky" so far as the covering forces were concerned. They were unable to prevent the enemy from evacuating the remnants of his land forces from Sicily piecemeal across the Straits under the cover of his batteries on the mainland, but it is to their credit that at no time did the enemy make any attempt with his naval forces, other than E-Boats and submarines, to interfere at sea. The Allies command of the seas surrounding Sicily was absolute from D-day until the last German soldier had quitted Sicilian soil.

¹Ammunition expenditure :—

<i>Aurora</i>	..	..	..	..	..	152 C.P.B.C.
<i>Penn</i>	..	..	..	..	..	234 H.E., 14 starshell.
<i>Dido</i>	..	..	..	..	..	220 S.A.P., 160 H.E.
<i>Panther</i>	..	..	..	..	..	125 H.E.

THE INVASION OF SICILY**OPERATION "HUSKY"****PART IV****THE WESTERN TASK FORCE****PLAN AND ORDERS FOR THE ORGANIZATION OF
THE ATTACKING FORCES****NARRATIVE OF THE ASSAULT LANDINGS
AND MAINTENANCE OF THE BEACHES****CHAPTERS X AND XI****SECTIONS 64-77**

CHAPTER X

84. OBJECTIVE AND ORDERS OF THE WESTERN TASK FORCE

(Ref. Plans 1, 2, 18, 19)

The primary object of the Western Task Force under the command of Vice-Admiral H. K. Hewitt, U.S.N. (N.C.W.T.F.) was: (a) to land sufficient forces to capture a bridgehead on the South Coast of Sicily, (b) to capture and defend the aerodromes of Ponte Olivo, Biscari and Comiso.

For this a military force of three divisions was to be landed on the stretch of coast west of Cape Passero at three beaches, designated CENT, DIME and JOSS, between Cape Scalambri and Port Licata.¹

The boundaries of the area of operations allotted to the Western Task Force were:—

- (a) North—the parallel of 38° N. latitude.
- (b) West—the meridian of 12° E. longitude.
- (c) South-west—a line drawn 110° from Point Spadillo (Pantellaria).
- (d) South-east—a line drawn 225° from Religione Point (Sicily).

In general outline the following were the principal features of the project. A covering force of cruisers would cover the eastward passage of the Western assault convoys and of convoy K.M.F. 18 of the Eastern Task Force on D—2. This force would make the passage of the Tunisian War Channel astern of the N.C.F.1 convoy (from Oran and Algiers).

The Allied assaults would be covered from attack by enemy surface ships by Forces "H" and "Z."

On D — 2, Task Group 80.7², consisting of three U.S. cruisers and seven destroyers, would cover the eastward movement of the Allied convoys. During the night of D — 2/D — 1, a British screening force of two M.T.B. and one M.G.B. Flotillas would operate on the western flank of the Western Task Force. At 0800 D — day, this screen would come under the command of the N.C.W.T.F. Naval bombardment of enemy defences would be carried out by a supporting force of light cruisers and destroyers.

The North Africa Coastal Command would provide fighter coverage along the coast of Africa and over the Tunisian war channel; the Malta Command providing cover during the approach on D — 1.

Fighter cover for the CENT and DIME attack forces would be provided from Malta and for JOSS attack forces from Pantellaria until the Sicilian airfields were captured and in operation.

Paratroops would be dropped behind the enemy lines during moonlight on D — 1, to capture airfields and divert enemy forces from the beach defences prior to the seaborne assault.

¹ See Section 4.² Night fighter cover for this group could not be provided as its route was north of a minefield extending northerly from a point in the vicinity of Bizerta to a distance of nearly 100 miles.

British submarines would act as navigation beacons in the three western attack beach areas. Controlled minefields were reported to exist off all the southern beaches.

The following enemy ports were to come under the control of the United States forces:—Porto Empedocle, Marsala, Trapani and Palermo.

As soon as Syracuse was in operation, maintenance of the U.S. military forces would be undertaken through that port. After the opening of ports to shipping of the Eastern Task Force, additional British landing craft might be allocated to the Western Task Force, to assist in maintenance over the beaches.

85. PREPARATION AND TRAINING PERIOD

A total of 601 ships and landing craft, together with 1,124 minor ship-borne landing craft, were assigned to the Western Task Force.

As the *Ancon* was the only ship fitted out as a Headquarters Ship that arrived in the Mediterranean area of operations, it was necessary, to alter and partially equip the following ships and craft:—*Monrovia*, *Samuel Chase*, *Biscayne* and eight L.C.I.(L)s.

In addition to the voyage repairs after the Atlantic crossing, it was necessary to make several alterations in both landing ships and craft.

The erroneous loading of large quantities of spare parts and equipment in merchant ships and L.S.T.s, which were not proceeding to the destinations of the consignments, involved serious delays and enormous transshipments to ensure delivery.

Amphibious training of the 1st Infantry Division and the 2nd Armoured Division was conducted in the Arzeu area, while the 3rd Infantry Division carried out shore-to-shore training in the Bizerta-Tunis area, and the 82nd Airborne Division at Oudja. The assault forces were moved to their staging areas by 22nd June, the date of the arrival of the 45th Division at Oran from the U.S.A. Rehearsals and special training of task groups were carried out in the period 22nd June-4th July. These exercises, on account of the short time available, had to be hurriedly planned and conducted on a reduced scale.

Landing Craft

For the beaches in the Gulf of Gela, means had to be developed to bridge the gaps between grounded L.S.T. and the shore. The Navy pontoon causeways were preferred, after extensive trials with the Army treadway bridges. Ten L.S.T.s were altered to provide for side-carrying of one complete causeway each. One L.S.T. was converted into an auxiliary aircraft carrier for the transport and launching of Army Cub spotting planes and another was modified to carry G.C.I. equipment for control of fighter aircraft. Others were provided with means for pumping fuel and water to shore tankage. In some L.S.T.s facilities were installed to render them available as hospital carriers.

The most important innovation, however, was the utilisation of six-davit L.S.T.s; 36 L.S.T.s were thus able each to carry 6 L.C.V.P.s at davits, permitting the embarkation of one company of infantry for the initial assault. The L.S.T.s beached later to discharge vehicles.

66. ORGANIZATION OF THE WESTERN TASK FORCE (U.S. FORCES)

(1) Task Force 80—Control Force.

Task Group 80.1.

Force Flagship *Monrovia*. Flag of N.C.W.T.F. (Vice-Admiral Hewitt, U.S.N.) (Comnavnaw).

Destroyer *McLanahan* (ex Desron 16).

Task Group 80.2 .. Desron 7.

(Escort Group.) *Plunket* (D.D.431), destroyers Flag.

Desdiv. 13 .. *Niblack* (D.D.424), *Gleaves* (D.D.423), *Benson* (D.D.421).

Desron. 8 .. *Wainwright* (D.D.419), destroyers Flag.

Desdiv. 16 .. *Mayrant* (D.D.402), *Rhind* (D.D.404), *Trippe* (D.D.403), *Rowan* (D.D.405).

Task Group 80.3 .. *Ordroneaux* (D.D.617) (ex Desron 16).

(Screening Group.) M.T. Bron 15—17 M.T.B.s (P.T.).

Task Group 80.4 .. 10—A.R.B.s P.T. 213 (repair ship, battle damage, converted L.S.T.s).

Task Group 80.5 .. *Keokuk*, *Salem*, *Weehawken*, minelayers. (Minelaying Group.)

Task Group 80.6 .. *Orizaba*, *Chateau Thierry*, transports.

6 L.S.T., 7 L.C.T., 11 L.C.I. (L), 16 L.C.I. (L) (British).

(2) Task Force 81—Dime Attack Force

Trans. Div. 3 .. *Samuel Chase*, transport (Comampornaw). Flag of C.T.F. 81 (Rear-Admiral Hall, U.S.N.).

Dickman, transport (A.P.), *Thurstow*, transport, *Barnett*, transport, *Oberon*, M.T./store ship (A.K.), *Lyon*, transport, *Betelguese*, M.T./store ship, *Stanton*, transport.

L.S.I. (S), H.M.S. *Prince Charles*, H.M.S. *Prince Leopold*.

Comdiv. 8 .. 6-in. cruisers—*Savannah*, *Boise*.

Desron. 17 .. *Nelson* (D.D.623), destroyers Flag.

Desdiv. 33 .. *Murphy* (D.D.603), *Jeffers* (D.D.621), *Glennon* (D.D.620), *Maddox* (D.D.622).

Desdiv. 34 .. *Butler* (D.D.636), *Herndon* (D.D.638), *Gherardi* (D.D.637), *Shubrick* (D.D.639).

Minesweepers .. *Steady* (A.M. 118) (ex Mindiv 17.), *Sustain* (A.M. 119) (ex Mindiv 17.).

Motor Minesweepers (Y.M.S.)—6.

(A/S) Patrol Vessels (P.C.)—4.

(A/S) Submarine Chasers (S.C.)—6.

Fleet tug *Hopi* (towing pontoon causeways), *Redwing* (salvage vessel).

L.S.T.—16 (including two carrying pontoons).

L.C.I. (L)—19.

(3) Task Force 85—Cent Attack Force

Headquarters Ship *Ancon*, transport. Flag of C.T.F. 85 (Rear-Admiral Kirk, U.S.N.) (Comamphorlant).

Trans. Div. 1.

Leonard Wood, transport (A.P.), *Dorothea Dix*, transport (A.P.), *Florence Nightingale*, transport (A.P.), *Mary Lee*, transport (A.P.), *James O'Hara*, transport (A.P.), *Alcyonne*, M.T. store ship (A.K.), *Andromeda*, M.T. store ship (A.K.).

Trans. Div. 5.

Charles Carrol, transport (A.P.), *Thomas Jefferson*, transport (A.P.), *Susan Anthony*, transport (A.P.), *William Biddle*, transport (A.P.), *Procyon*, M.T. store ship (A.K.), *Arcturus*, M.T. store ship (A.K.).

Trans. Div. 7.

Calvert, transport (A.P.), *Neville*, transport (A.P.), *Anne Arundel*, transport (A.P.), *Frederick Funston*, transport (A.P.), *Bellatrix*, M.T. store ship (A.K.).

6-in. cruiser *Philadelphia*. Flag of Cruiser Division 8.

15-in. Monitor H.M.S. *Abercrombie*.

Desron. 15 .. *Davidson* (D.D.618), destroyers Flag.

Desdiv. 29 .. *Mervine* (D.D.489), *Beatty* (D.D.640), *Quick* (D.D.490), *Tillman* (D.D.641).

Desdiv. 30 .. *Cowie* (D.D.632), *Doran* (D.D.634), *Knight* (D.D.633), *Earle* (D.D.635).

Desron. 16 .. *Parker* (D.D.604).

Desdiv. 31 .. *Laub* (D.D.613), *Mackenzie* (D.D.614), *Kendrick* (D.D.612).

Desdiv. 32 .. *Boyle* (D.D.600), *Nields* (D.D.616), *Champlin* (D.D.601).

Old destroyers (ODD), *Cole*, *Bernadou*, *Dallas*.

Mindiv 17—Minesweepers (A.M.) *Staff*, *Speed*, *Skill*, *Strive*.

Motor Minesweepers (Y.M.S.)—12.

(A/S) Patrol Vessels (P.C.)—6.

(A/S) Submarine Chasers—4.

Fleet Tugs—*Narragansett*, *Nauset* (towing pontoon causeways).

14 L.S.T., 8 L.C.T. (5), 6 L.C.I. (L) (including 10 loaded for 45th Division, 3 carrying pontoons).

(4) Task Force 86—Joss Attack Force

Headquarters Ship—*Biscayne*, transport. Flag of C.T.F. 86 (Rear-Admiral Conolly, U.S.N.) (Comcrabnaw).

L.S.I. (S) H.M.S. *Princess Josephine Charlotte*, H.M.S. *Princess Astrid*.

Com. Div. 13 .. 6-in. cruisers *Brooklyn*, *Birmingham*.

Desron. 13 .. *Buck* (D.D.420), destroyers Flag.

Desdiv. 25 .. *Woolsey* (D.D.437), *Edison* (D.D.439), *Ludlow* (D.D.438), *Bristol* (D.D.453).

Desdiv. 26 .. *Wilkes* (D.D.441), *Swanson* (D.D.443), *Nicholson* (D.D.442), *Roe* (D.D.418).

(4) Task Force 86—continued

Minesweepers *Seer* (A.M.), *Sentinel*.

Motor Minesweepers (Y.M.S.)—6.

(A/S) Patrol Vessels (P.C.)—7.

(A/S) Submarine Chasers (S.C.)—26.

Fleet Tugs—*Morcuo* (towing pontoon causeways), *Intent*, *Resolute*.

L.S.T.—40 (including 5 carrying pontoons; others carrying 6 L.C.V.P. and fitted as hospital carriers).

L.C.T. (5)—85.

L.C.I. (L)—54.

L.C.T. (3 or 4)—12 (British).

L.C.G. (L)—9 (British).

L.C.F. (L)—7 (British).

(5) Task Force 87**Train**

Delta (A.R.), repair ship, *Salamonie* (A.O.), tanker, *Vulcan* (A.R.), repair ship, *Chemung* (A.O.), tanker, *Mount Baker* (A.E.), ammunition ship, *Niobrara* (A.O.), tanker, *Tarazed* (A.F.), store ship, *Chamberlain* (A.O.), tanker, *Winooski* (A.O.), tanker, *Mattaponi* (A.O.), tanker, *Chicopee* (A.O.), tanker.

67. THE APPROACH

(Ref. Plans 2, 18, 19.)

The approach plan was designed to permit daylight deployment of forces, in order simultaneously to deliver attacks in strength.

The routing and timing of landing craft convoys sailing from Sousse, Tunis and Bizerta, enabled the L.S.T.s (Convoy T.J.M. 1) and L.C.I.s (Convoy T.J.F. 1) to rendezvous and later make a landfall 270° five miles from Gozo Lt. at 1600 on D — 1) and thence to proceed north-westward to join the L.C.T.s (Convoy T.J.S. 1) at 1800, near the meridian of 14° E., whence the approach was made by the Joss force.

During D — 1 the weather proved most unfavourable for the craft convoys, a westerly wind force 4 with a moderate sea. However, the Gozo landfall was made on time, the L.S.T.s and L.C.I.s of the Cent, Dime and Kool¹ groups were released and the Joss forces manœuvred to make their approach. On a northerly course the L.S.T.s had difficulty in making 8 knots, the L.C.I.s and the smaller craft made very heavy weather and gradually began to straggle. The L.C.T. convoy proceeded independently in order to ensure its arrival in time to support the assault infantry.

9th July, Joss Force

The Joss L.S.T.s and L.C.I.s had to be pressed; as some L.S.T.s lost sight of their next groups ahead and anchored in the wrong areas. The control ships, likewise having become separated were not in their proper positions to assemble and lead the assault L.C.V.P.s to the beach.

However, the Joss forces closed on the reference vessels and the beacon submarine and all the attack groups attained their initial transport areas and landed at their respective beaches.

¹ Kool group was Task Group 80.6, carrying the reserve force of the Western Task Force.

Dime and Cent Forces

The Dime and Cent forces had been routed well southward of Malta so as to make a long approach run. Dime force consisting of the 1st sections of Convoy N.C.F. 1, passed through the tangent position off Gozo on time (1850), Cent force, the 2nd section of convoy N.C.F. 1, was nine minutes behind schedule (1920).

The L.S.T.s and L.C.I.s of Dime and Cent forces headed north-eastward at 1600, and then steered courses that enabled the smaller craft to join the transports, they experienced a considerable south-easterly set from the wind and sea. Rolling heavily, some of the Cent L.S.T.s shifted their cargoes and the formation had to be manœuvred to permit shoring.

When the two sections of Convoy N.C.F. 1 passed northward of Gozo, the L.S.T.s and L.C.I.s were sighted athwart their approach course, involving alterations of course, particularly by the combat loaders¹ of the Cent force between 1953 and 2050, when the proper approach track was reached.

Meanwhile the Dime force had increased speed to make up the loss of time, but the L.S.T.s and L.C.I.s unable to make headway gradually fell astern. The approach formation adopted by Dime force was a single column of 2 cruisers and 11 transports, flanked on one side by a column of L.C.T.s and on the other by L.C.I.s. Due to straggling these columns became inordinately long.

At 2305, one division of the Cent force was delayed by *Thomas Jefferson* stopping to lower and cast adrift a support boat; the four ships next astern of her also stopped to maintain position.

No difficulty was experienced in the approach to the initial transport areas. Land was picked up by Radar at 2200 and the beacon submarine served as a final check. The three British submarines employed as beacons: *Seraph* (Cent), *Shakespeare* (Dime), *Safari* (Joss) had been exercised previously with the escort vessels with which rendezvous would be effected. The submarines took up their offensive patrol stations on D — 3 and maintained them in spite of interference by low flying aircraft forcing them on occasion to dive. On D — 1, the *Seraph* was sighted by the *Cowie* (D.D.) at 2318, the *Shakespeare* by the *Cole* (D.D.) at 2215 and the *Safari* by the *Bristol* (D.D.) at 2230. The submarines then retired under escort. As the *Safari* left her station two sticks of bombs were dropped near her by Ju.88s. The Cent forces reached their assigned area at 0040 and the Dime forces at 0045.

While approaching the coast an air raid was seen to be in progress over Gela, where searchlight beams and A.A. fire were clearly visible. All the task forces reached their rendezvous without detection by the shore defences.

From the direction of Licata a sweeping searchlight at 0030 illuminated some ships, but apparently without arousing the enemy. It was realized that the Cent force would be delayed in making its assault. At 0055 Dime force began lowering landing craft. Three red flares were seen on shore at about 0200, others were observed shortly afterwards in the Joss area. On board the *Monrovia* the progress of the assault craft of Dime force was watched by Radar P.P.1.

In each area primary and secondary control vessels regulated and guided the shoreward movement of the landing craft waves. These control vessels consisted of A/S patrol vessels, submarine chasers and large M/S. Their duties were well performed; the landing craft were escorted in good order and released to their respective beaches at suitable time intervals.

Vice-Admiral Hewitt wrote in his report that, "the planning and execution of the approach from the standpoint of navigation and seamanship left nothing to be desired and was one of the high-lights of the operation."

¹ Combat loaders—transports.

68. THE WESTERN ASSAULT

(Ref. Plans 19, 20, 21)

The assault by the Western Task Force was launched against a 40-mile stretch of coastline which was divided into three distinct areas where the beaches selected for the landings were separated by several miles.

In the initial stage, covering the events of the first four days, each attack force was independently striving to attain its immediate objectives.

On the right flank of the Western assault area, the task of the Cent Attack force was to :—

- (1) Capture Scoglitti.
- (2) Capture the airfields at Comiso and Biscari.
- (3) Extend the beachhead to the line Ragusa—Chiaramonte—Caltagirone.
- (4) Establish contact with the British forces to the eastward.

In the centre of the western assault area, the task of the Dime attack force was to :—

- (1) Capture Gela.
- (2) Capture the airfield at Ponte Olivo.
- (3) Extend the beachhead to the line Niscemi—Ponte Olivo.
- (4) Establish contact with Cent attack force on the right and the Joss attack force on the left.

On the left flank of the western assault area, the task of the Joss attack force was to :—

- (1) Capture Licata.
- (2) Protect the left flank.

Although it was planned to make the landings simultaneously ; Rear Admiral Kirk in the Cent area was obliged to retard H-hour until 0345, due to delays experienced from the prevailing weather conditions.

The Landings

The landing of the army forces at their respective beaches is best studied on Plan No. 21. The Cent assault was directed against beaches in the vicinity of Scoglitti. Three Regimental Combat Teams (R.C.T.), comprising the 45th Division reinforced, were landed in L.C.V.P.s. The frontage of the assault beaches was approximately 25,000 yards, the order of landing being :—

Beach	Force	Transport
Red	1st and 2nd Battalion, 180th R.C.T. ..	"Calvert," "Neville."
Green	2nd Battalion, 179th R.C.T. ..	"Dorothy Dix."
Yellow	1st Battalion, 179th R.C.T. ..	"Leonard Wood."
Blue	As assigned during the follow up ..	
Red 2	As assigned during the follow up ..	
Green 2	2nd Battalion, 157th R.C.T. ..	"Thomas Jefferson."
Yellow 2	1st Battalion, 157th R.C.T. ..	"Charles Carroll."
Blue 2	As assigned during the follow up ..	

The 3rd battalions of the above R.C.T.s, embarked in the transports *Frederick Funston*, *Florence Nightingale* and *Biddle*, acted as reserves.

Dime

The Dime assault was directed against beaches of approximately 8,500 yards frontage at or to the east of Gela. The force consisted of two Ranger battalions, and two R.C.T.s of the 1st Infantry Division reinforced (less one R.C.T.). The Ranger battalions landed in L.C.V.P.s and L.C.A.s, with a combat engineer battalion in three L.C.I.s in reserve. Two battalion landing teams respectively from each R.C.T. landed in L.C.V.P.s the 3rd battalions of each R.C.T. being in reserve in eight L.C.I. (L).s. The order of landing was :—

Beach	Force	Transport
Red } Gela	1st Ranger Battalion	"Dickman."
Green }	4th Ranger Battalion	"Prince Charles."
Yellow	1st Battalion, 26th R.C.T.	"Prince Leopold."
Blue	2nd Battalion, 26th R.C.T.	"Barrett."
Red 2	2nd Battalion, 26th R.C.T.	"Lyon."
Green 2	1st Battalion, 26th R.C.T.	"Thurston."
		"Stanton."

Joss

The Joss assault was directed against beaches on either side of Licata, thus out-flanking that small port. One ranger battalion and three regimental combat teams, comprising the 3rd Infantry Division reinforced, landed at beaches having an approximate frontage of 22,000 yards. The ranger battalion landed in L.C.A.s, the R.C.T.s in L.C.V.P.s. One armoured combat command of the 2nd Armoured Division acted as a floating reserve for Joss force. The order of landing was :—

Beach	Force	Transport
Red	1st, 2nd, 3rd Battalions, 7th R.C.T. ..	Landing craft (L.S.T.).
Green, West	3rd Ranger Battalion	"Princess Charlotte."
Green, East	2nd Battalion, 15th R.C.T.	"Princess Astrid."
Yellow	3rd and 1st Battalion, 15th R.C.T. ..	Landing craft.
Blue	2nd, 1st, 3rd Battalion, 30th R.C.T. ..	Landing craft.

Floating Reserve

The floating reserve for the Western Task Force (Kool force) was comprised of one combat command—2nd Armoured Division and the 18th R.C.T. from the 1st Division which were embarked in the transports *Chateau Thierry*, *Orizaba* and in landing craft.

Landing Craft

In the assault landings the method employed was to land the assaulting troops in L.C.V.P.s and L.C.A.s. The landings of the reserve and follow-up forces, on the other hand were effected : Cent force—three reserve battalions in L.C.V.P.s. from transports ; Dime force—three reserve battalions in L.C.I. (L).s from transports ; Joss force—four immediate follow-up battalions in L.C.I. (L).s and two battalions from L.S.T.s.

Underwater and Beach Obstacles

No underwater enemy obstacles were found at the assault beaches. A few sand bars and false beaches interfered with the beaching of landing craft. Anti-vehicle and anti-personnel mines as well as wire were encountered above high water mark. The naval demolition parties were not required during the assault.

69. DISEMBARKATION OF THE ASSAULT FORCES

(Ref. Plans 19, 20, 21, 23)

Disembarkation commenced shortly after midnight, in spite of the adverse weather conditions, which chiefly affected the Dime and Cent areas. The lowering and troop loading of L.C.V.P.s and L.C.A.s was carried out in a minimum of time with only minor accidents. Cent force being more exposed had a number of craft damaged and lost time; Dime assault waves were cleared in 30 to 45 minutes.

The assault waves after forming up were escorted by the landing craft control vessels to their lines of departure. From these positions they made for their respective beaches and unloaded, returning as ordered to make a follow-up troop trip. The direction, to "Extend the timing of assault waves to avoid congestion on beaches" was generally well carried out.

Cent

In the Cent area the landings were generally unopposed due to prior bombardment and the 157th R.C.T. pushed inland quickly and captured its initial objectives ahead of schedule. The 179th R.C.T., landed on the Green and Yellow beaches, was delayed in its movements by extensive minefields.

The landing of the 180th R.C.T. was successful but was not made on the correct beaches, consequently delay occurred in forming and marching off.

Dime

Aided in identifying their beaches by fires inland caused by bombing, the first Dime assault wave landed practically on schedule (0245). Initial opposition at the Red, Green and Blue beaches was light, at Yellow it was heavy and at Red 2 and Green 2 fairly heavy. With surf breaking on the beaches, a strong current and a westerly wind of Force 4, many landing craft broached to on the beaches. The L.C.I. (L)s carrying the reserve battalions discharged their troops at about 0330 and hauled off successfully, except L.C.I. (L) 220, which broached to after losing her stern anchor and having her port propellor damaged by shell fire.

Joss

The initial assault waves in the Joss area landed on time in the face of enemy counter-fire at the correct beaches in spite of delay caused by weather. The transport groups anchored between H-20 minutes and H-90 minutes, apparently more than the planned distance of $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the beaches; thus obliging the assault L.C.V.P.s to make a long run.

At those beaches where the assault waves had not been able to keep to the scheduled H-hour, congestion was avoided during the actual assault by sufficient space timing between the waves.

Destruction of Beach Defences

In the Cent area, destroyers covering the landing opened fire at H-15 minutes. The fire was lifted just before the first wave landed; its effect enabled the 45th Division to be landed practically unopposed and to establish its bridgehead faster than planned.

Remarks on the Landings

The Cent force having landed on a very broad front; its stores, ammunition and supplies were distributed along several miles of sandy beaches whose exits were few, difficult and mined. The withdrawal of landing craft was satisfactory although surf on the outer bar broached to some L.C.V.P.s and several were lost with casualties on rocks off Green 2 and Yellow 2 beaches. Salvage was handicapped where shoal water prevented the operation of tugs. In the Dime area the landing craft encountered little difficulty. Eight out of 16 L.C.I.s (L) carrying the reserve battalions of the R.C.T.s were able to disembark their troops direct on land. In other cases auxiliary craft such as rubber boats and L.C.V.P.s were utilized. The beaches were found to be heavily mined resulting in the loss of some bulldozers, Dukws and other vehicles.

In the Joss assault area, as expected, the Green beaches proved to be the most hazardous. The narrow rocky entrance, a north-westerly cross sea and a shallow beach made it impossible to withdraw or even assist the beached landing craft until after the succeeding assault waves were ashore. Most of the craft were not broached to, but stuck in the sand. At Red beach the L.S.T.s had great difficulty in unloading due to the poor gradient and soft sand, the L.C.T.s were sent in five at a time to the right flank of Red Beach. Finally it was decided to unload all L.S.T.s either at Yellow or Blue beaches or in Licata Harbour.

Minesweeping

Little opportunity was available, preparatory to the operation, for training in minesweeping, consequently the majority of C.O.s of minesweepers were relatively inexperienced. In general, first the channels and then the transport areas were swept. Fortunately in the transport areas the mines were found and cleared. Enemy minefields were found off and to the westward of Porto Empedocle.

Minelaying

On D + 1 a defensive A/S minefield was laid to protect the transport area. There was no evidence of submarines being damaged or destroyed in the minefield, although a few mines detonated on D + 2. In the early morning of 14th July, during poor visibility two mines were detonated by the *Brooklyn* but she sustained only minor damage, the mines having been moored too deep seriously to affect surface ships.

CHAPTER XI

70. NARRATIVE OF EVENTS. CENT AREA

(Ref. Plans 19, 21, 22)

10th July—D-day

At 0040 the *Ancon* anchored and the first assault waves landed at 0354 unopposed. General Middleton (45th Division) reported at 0448, that everything appeared to be going well. This success was credited to the effect of the preliminary bombardment. An unloading shuttle service was started at 0600 and the transports began to move in to an anchorage 5,000 yards off the beaches.

At 0732 H.M.S. *Abercrombie* opened fire on Cent inland targets.

All the initial landings having been satisfactory, General Middleton landed at about 0826. Unsatisfactory reports of the situation at Yellow Beach were received at 1000 and when General Bradley (II Corps) at 1155 reported that the operation was "proceeding according to plan," no information had been received of the parachute troops or Rangers.

Rear-Admiral Kirk reported (1535) that Scoglitti had been occupied at 1415 and our forces had reached a position two kilometres west of Vittoria at 1215. Heavy fighting was in progress at the junction of the railway and Comiso Road at 1450. Casualties were light and the 45th Division expected to reach its planned line by dark.

The 3rd Transport Division was ordered (1753) to anchor off new beaches situated 2,000 yards north-west of Scoglitti. All heavy guns and ammunition for Cent force were ordered to be disembarked at the south end of Yellow beach.

11th July—D + 1

The transports were directed to complete unloading by sunset 12th (D + 2).

At 0300, it was reported that troops of the 45th Division were within a mile of Vittoria and would attack Comiso airport in the morning.

The *William Biddle* (transport) and L.S.T. 382 sustained minor damage in collision at 0530. Congestion on the beaches, and lack of personnel and vehicles for unloading and removing stores caused several loaded craft to be turned away from the beaches during the day. At 1555, a report was received of the capture of Comiso Airport.

Admiral Hewitt (N.C.W.T.F.) visited the *Ancon* at 1630. All pontoon causeways were directed to be sited at the newly-marked beaches north-west of Scoglitti and the remaining L.S.T.s were ordered to unload there.

The *Laub* (DD) reported that four tanks had been destroyed in the area by naval gunfire. At 1915 the situation was: Ragusa Airfield had been taken; seven transports were expected to complete unloading by midnight; supplies were moving across the beaches to Vittoria, but, due to lack of unloading personnel, craft were being held up, some having to wait off the beaches for three hours.

At 2130, the screening group commenced searching for an enemy submarine detected on the left flank of Cent force.

Enemy batteries opened fire in Cent area at 2310, and a large fire was started on the beach by a hit and run raider.

The departure of the Cent transports was cancelled. Twenty L.C.M.s were ordered to be transferred to Dime area to assist unloading and then to proceed to Joss area.

12th July—D + 2

Unloading progressed very slowly and at 0915 was reported to be completely held up by failure to clear the beaches and unload landing craft, so far only four transports had been unloaded.

The C.C.O. (Vice-Admiral Lord Mountbatten) visited the *Ancon* at 1150.

As the L.S.T.s, L.C.I.s (L) and L.C.T.s were employed unloading transports, delay was anticipated in using these craft for shuttle convoys. The pontoons were shifted to the new beaches, north of Scoglitti.

Rear-Admiral Kirk advised all commands (1601) that his flag would be shifted to the *Earle* (DD) and the *Ancon* would sail with the transports. Administration of Task Force 85 would be continued from the *Ancon*. Lt.-Gen. Patton (C.G. 7th Army) established his command post on shore at 1700.

The return convoy consisting of the *Monrovia*, *Ancon*, *Samuel Chase* and empty transports weighed at 1811. All the warships, and landing craft remaining were placed under the tactical command of Rear-Admiral Conolly (C.T.F. 86).

In the Cent area the targets of the supporting ships were now well inland in the vicinity of Niscemi and Butera.

13th July—D + 3

The C.T.F. 86 called for a "prompt and thorough programme of boat¹ overhaul" together with a detailed report of condition of all ships.

The Army Air Force having reported that its limits were restricted to areas off the Task Force beaches, Rear-Admiral Conolly requested that the order should be modified.

The remaining transports of Task Force 85 having by now been completely unloaded, were formed into convoy at 1700 for Oran.

71. NARRATIVE OF EVENTS. DIME AREA

(Ref. Plans 19, 21, 22)

10th July—D-day

The first assault waves of Dime force (Ranger Battalion) reached their beaches at H-hour after encountering medium artillery and machine gunfire. The supporting craft replying with rockets at the enemy batteries while the destroyers fired at searchlights, bombardment of the shore positions became general. While the coastal towns, silhouetted by fires aided navigation, a mobile air beacon near Scoglitti was observed to be still operating, and at 0345 the *Philadelphia* was ordered to shoot it out. The *Savannah* and *Boise* opened fire on pre-arranged targets, H.M.S. *Abercrombie* was ordered to lie off the transport area until dawn. Several of the enemy batteries engaged by the *Savannah* and *Shubrick* were silenced by 0424.

¹ i.e., landing craft.

Enemy air attacks which commenced at 0433 were continued at intervals throughout the day. All types of aircraft were employed in high-level bombing, dive-bombing and machine-gunning the beaches, landing craft and transports. Attacks were made by large and small formations as well as by single raiders, the last proving most difficult to detect. At 0458, the *Maddox* (DD) was hit and sunk by a bomb.

All Dime initial landings were reported (0516) as having been successful. Only at Yellow beach had more than light opposition been encountered.

The situation at 0700 was: the 16th R.C.T. had reached its phase line and the 1st Division command post had been established. After 0400 only the 26th R.C.T. encountered any opposition. Nothing was yet known of the movements of the Ranger Battalion assaulting Gela. The transports had begun moving in towards the beaches.

At 0710 the beaches near Gela came under accurate shell fire, at Blue beach some casualties were caused by mines. The supporting ships bombarded the shore defences intermittently. At 0800, the *Boise's* scouting plane reported enemy activity near her target. Supporting fire was intensified and the *Boise* and *Jeffers* opened fire (0826) on some advancing German tanks, the *Shubrick* also fired at another tank column. These tank formations were observed heading in the direction of Gela at 0900.

Further reports at 0919 described the situation as very bad at the Yellow and Blue beaches where land mines caused many casualties, and traffic had to be deflected to Red 2 beach. As this beach soon came under accurate shell fire, the *Boise* and *Savannah* were ordered to silence the enemy guns. At 1005, the *Boise* was ordered to keep the advancing enemy tanks threatening the Gela bridgehead under fire, and Admiral Conolly (C.T.F. 86—Joss) was asked to spare a cruiser to reinforce the Dime area. Accurate enemy fire on Red 2 beach eventually forced the landing craft to be temporarily diverted.

The Kool attack force was ordered (1020) to an anchorage near the Dime transports. Eleven L.C.T.s arrived from the Joss area.

Some 30 tanks, of the Herman Goering Panzer Division, were reported to be advancing on Gela. When the enemy again began shelling Gela and Red 2 beach at 1100, the cruisers replied, trying to locate the source.

By 1212 Blue and Yellow beaches had been cleared of mines and were ready to receive landing craft and vehicles.

As the 1st Infantry Division at 1430 was still in difficulties near Gela, the Kool attack force was ordered to land in the Dime area and form an army reserve force.

Admiral Sir A. B. Cunningham, Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, visited the W.T.F. area at 1530. He informed the N.C.W.T.F. of the success of the British landings in the eastern area and congratulated him on "competing so successfully with weather and other difficulties".

The enemy continued his attack (1632) in strength with tanks, artillery and by air. H.M.S.s *Prince Charles* and *Prince Leopold* having disembarked their personnel were detached to Malta. Kool Force commenced landing at 1700, in L.C.T.s. The cruisers and destroyers were ordered to remain under way during the night as a protective screen for the transports.

Following the discovery of more mines, Blue and Yellow beaches were closed again at 1815; Red 2 beach was reported as the only one suitable for L.S.T.s.

At 1835, L.S.T. 313 was hit and set on fire and L.S.T. 312 damaged during an air attack; the *McLanahan* shot down an enemy aircraft.

The C.G. 1st Infantry Division reported (1930) two hours continuous dive-bombing and asked for more fighter cover. An L.S.T. was set on fire by a direct hit. The C.T.F. 86 (Joss area) was ordered to send all available L.C.M.s and L.C.T.s to assist at Dime and Cent beaches, where unloading would be continued all night. The slowness of unloading was reported as largely due to inefficient working of the shore parties.

At 2150, the supporting ships intensified their efforts to neutralize the enemy's counter-attacks near Gela, where our troops were being driven back towards their beaches. The C.G. 1st Infantry Division asked for tank reinforcements at 2215. The Kool Force reserves being landed could satisfy his demand, but, as they had not landed in force by 2350, the request was repeated.

11th July—D + 1

The *Butler* and *Glennon* relieved the *Shubrick* and *Jeffers* for fire-support duty.

In an attack at 0635 by 12 dive-bombers and fighter-bombers, the transports *Orizaba* and *Barnett* were hit and damaged, and the *Monrovia* and *Dickman* near-missed.

All available L.C.T.s from Joss area were ordered (0730) to assist to land Kool Force at Dime.

At 0833, convoy N.C.S. 1 consisting of seven Liberty ships, Mindiv 50 and Desron 7 (less *Mayo*) arrived.

Rear-Admiral Hall reported that resources for reinforcing the shore party were exhausted and suggested the employment of soldiers to assist unloading. The supporting ships cruised close inshore firing salvos at the enemy positions and H.M.S. *Abercrombie* was made available from Cent area to bombard the Gela sector.

A defensive minefield was laid to seaward of the Dime transport area. H.M.S. *Colombo* (A.A. cruiser) was ordered (1200) to reinforce the A.A. protection of the W.T.F. anchorage.

At 1228 the army called for naval support-gunfire against a formation of 30 tanks advancing in the valley behind Gela. The *Savannah*, reporting at 1510, that our tanks were in action, requested notification to all ships.

In air attacks at 1535 and 1546 on the transports and beaches, several fires were started on the beaches and the *Robert Rowan* (ammunition ship) was hit and set on fire. Some other vessels were near-missed, only one aircraft was shot down.

At 1603, the *Robert Rowan* abandoned ship and all adjacent vessels were ordered to stand clear. At 1700 she blew up; attempts by the *McLanahan* to sink her failed as she was in shallow water. For hours she continued to burn, affording a brilliant beacon for aircraft.

At 1721, 13 enemy tanks were observed heading for the Gela beaches. Frequent air attacks took place after 2155, when the *Murphy* and *McLanahan* were near-missed. The wind rendered ineffectual all attempts to lay a smoke screen (2300) to shroud the glare of the blazing *Robert Rowan* from lighting up the transports. At 2230 Gela airfield was reported to be ready for use.

General Allen (1st Infantry Division) reporting (2345) heavy and costly bombing in the Dime area asked for more fighter protection. Meanwhile the R.A.F. reported that at least three attacks in the W.T.F. area had been turned back by night fighters.

12th July—D + 2

Despite delays in unloading, all but 10 per cent. was completed and seven transports would be ready to sail by night. The army reported that 13 out of 50 tanks attacking around Gela had been destroyed and that the remainder had withdrawn. General Truscott (Joss Force) offered to send assistance, as the situation in Joss area was so satisfactory.

H.M.S.s *Princess Charlotte* and *Princess Astrid* with army personnel arrived at 0300, having made a round trip to Africa a day ahead of schedule.

General Eisenhower, Allied Commander-in-Chief, visited the *Monrovia* at 0630, going ashore before leaving the area.

Twenty-four of our troop transport planes were reported to have been shot down during the night 11th/12th, the majority by our own A.A. guns. Ponte Olivo airfield was reported to have been captured.

The *Herndon* relieved the *Glennon* as fire support destroyer and L.S.T.s with escorts were sailed at 0915 for Bizerta.

H.M.S. *Colombo* was ordered to anchor off Gela Mole and provide A.A. protection. The C.C.O. (Vice-Admiral Lord L. Mountbatten) visited Vice-Admiral Hewitt.

At 1300, the situation ashore was reported to be infinitely better as our forces had thrown back the enemy counter-attacks at Gela and were moving forward on all fronts. The Dime transports had completed unloading.

H.M.S. *Abercrombie* was ordered (1530) to remain in the W.T.F. assault area for fire support.

Rear-Admiral Conolly (C.T.F. 86) in the *Biscayne*, having been directed to assume general charge of all the assault areas, anchored off Gela at 1555.

Vice-Admiral Hewitt advised all commands that his flag would be shifted to the *McLanahan*. The *Monrovia* would sail with the transports, but operational control would be continued until she arrived at Algiers, after which control would be from A.F.H.Q.

Some additional British and U.S. L.C.T.s arrived (1605) for duty in the assault areas.

Vice-Admiral Hewitt visited the *Biscayne* for conference at 1700. General Patton (C.G. 7th Army) landed to establish his command post.

The supporting ships intermittently bombarded targets inland in the vicinity of Niscemi and Butera. At 1811, the *Monrovia*, *Ancon*, *Samuel Chase* and transports weighed and formed convoy at 2000.

13th July—D + 3

Vice-Admiral Hewitt before leaving for Malta instructed the Comcrudiv 8, (Rear-Admiral Davidson) to withdraw the left flank fire support ships at night to the Gela area so as to afford them better protection.

14th July—D + 4

By this date the three assault landing areas had been merged into one command. The army was firmly established ashore and the period of maintenance and building up of supplies commenced.

72. NARRATIVE OF EVENTS. JOSS AREA

(Ref. Plans 19, 21, 22)

10th July—D-day

At 0142, the *Biscayne* anchored about 2½ miles off shore, midway between the Blue and Yellow reference vessels, with Licata bearing 127°. The first assault waves proceeded at 0204 and reached Blue beach at 0315.

The *Swanson* and *Roe*, having suffered damage in collision were directed to proceed to Malta. The *Buck* was ordered to replace them and cover the landing at Red beach, where continuous artillery and machine gunfire was reported (0400).

From 0433, when the first air attack took place, the enemy attacked from time to time throughout the day, strafing and bombing the transports, landing craft and beaches.

By 0440, all attack forces had reported successful initial landings.

The *Sentinel* (M/S) was hit during a dive bombing attack (0450) and, after suffering further damage from near-misses, sank at 1050.

On account of the severity of the enemy shelling, the Red beachmaster warned the C.T.F. 86 against landing L.C.T.s there. At 0512 an Me.110 was shot down by the *Swanson*. After the arrival of Spitfire fighter cover (0515) our fighters and spotting aircraft were fired on by our A.A. guns.

Shore batteries opened fire (0535) on the *Biscayne*, to which she replied by firing on the town of Licata; L.C.T.s en route to Red beach were ordered to wait until the enemy fire was reduced.

General Truscott (C.G., 3rd Division) reported (0630) satisfactory progress at Blue beach and that more landings were being made at Green beach while two battalions were already ashore at Red beach.

At 0641, the *Buck* was ordered to open rapid fire on a specified target and the *Brooklyn* and *Boise* to neutralize artillery and mortar fire at Red beach, which was accomplished, with a British L.C.G. (4) co-operating, by 0700. The L.C.T.s, ordered in to land regardless of cost, did so successfully at 0742, under cover of a smoke screen laid by the *Woolsey* and *Nicholson*.

When the *Boise's* scouting plane reported enemy activity near her target, support fire was intensified. Enemy shelling of the town and pier of Licata (0840) made landings there difficult, the other landings were satisfactory, resistance being overcome and objectives taken.

All commands were notified that 150 troop-carrying aircraft would be over Joss area between 2200 and 2230.

General Truscott reporting at 1100 and 1150 stated: that Poggio di Lango had been taken at 0636 and Gallodoro shortly afterwards, the area north-east of Licata was in our hands, also Castle Aqua, but the positions of the 7th Infantry were uncertain. Unloading was proceeding satisfactorily. Our forces had established four beachheads and moved into the outskirts of Licata within three hours of landing. Licata was virtually taken and all operations were going magnificently, despite the delays due to the stormy weather of the night approach. He praised the shooting of a cruiser which had destroyed the remaining enemy batteries and said that air cover was excellent and casualties light.

At 1259, the west gate of Licata Harbour was reported open. Air attacks which continued throughout the afternoon, did little damage. The town of Licata was reported (1605) to have been captured, our tanks were moving north, and all the Joss forces were progressing well.

At 1930, all L.C.M.s and L.C.T.s that could be spared were ordered to assist the landings at Dime and Cent beaches. Despite air attacks and choppy seas, only one beach and one pontoon causeway were not working (2135) and unloading continued all night. A pontoon causeway was reported (2225) to be working at the newly improved Yellow beach. An L.S.T. had received a direct hit (2252) in a dive bombing attack.

11th July—D + 1

The *Birmingham* supported Army reconnaissance west of Licata at daylight. Several air attacks were made on the beaches and shipping during the morning. L.S.T. 158 was hit and set on fire, otherwise little damage was done.

Vice-Admiral Hewitt (N.C.W.T.F.) visited the area (1135) to confer with Rear-Admiral Conolly (C.T.F. 86).

By 1321, the *Joss* transports were reported to be 75 per cent. unloaded. Air raids continued throughout the day at intervals. At 2205, the *Birmingham* was straddled by four bombs and the *Brooklyn* near-missed. The *Murphy* and *McLanahan* were near-missed when torpedo aircraft attacked the west flank.

It was reported that Licata airfield would be ready for use by dawn.

Our Airborne troops were reported to have landed at 2345, one transport plane was down in the *Joss* area.

General Truscott (C.G., 3rd Division) asked for a cruiser and two destroyers for fire support at daylight on the town of Agrigento and the road to Palma de Montechiaro.

12th July—D + 2

At 0347, General Truscott offered to send assistance to Dime area.

At 1555, the *Biscayne* anchored off Gela and Rear-Admiral Conolly took charge of all Naval Attack Force areas. The N.C.W.T.F. visited and conferred with him at 1700.

73. NARRATIVE OF EVENTS—14th JULY TO 24th JULY

(Ref. Plans 1, 18, 19)

The critical stage of the assault on Sicily by the Western Task Force was surmounted successfully by the 13th July. The military force was by then firmly established ashore and had advanced, seizing the airfields in the immediate neighbourhood of the beaches. Naval operations were next directed to building up and maintaining the Army, as it advanced to the west as well as inland. The progress of the campaign, together with the naval operations in support, is given in the following chronological outline:—

14th July—D + 4

While patrolling south-westward of Licata, the *Brooklyn* was damaged (0515) by striking one of our mines. Other ships gave occasional gunfire support at maximum ranges (0930). M.T. Bron 15 and T.G. 80.7 were ordered to operate against enemy shipping in the West Sicilian area and off Palermo. The *Brooklyn*, *Boise* and *Savannah* with escorts were ordered to proceed to Algiers.

On leaving Malta for Algiers, Vice-Admiral Hewitt signalled to the Western Task Force:—

“Due to careful planning, excellent seamanship, gunnery and engineering, and a high standard of proficiency and devotion to duty by all hands, the most difficult and complicated task of landing our troops on hostile shores has been successfully accomplished Well done. It is now our duty to support, maintain and build up the forces which have been landed. Carry on.”

15th July—D + 5

At 0600, Porto Empedocle and Agrigento were bombarded by the *Philadelphia*, *Birmingham* and H.M.S. *Abercrombie*. While manœuvring to avoid air attack the *Staff* (M/S) was damaged through striking a mine.

16th July—D + 6

The *Philadelphia* and *Birmingham* patrolled off Porto Empedocle which town was captured at 1430.

17th July—D + 7

The *Boise* and *Savannah* relieved the *Philadelphia* and *Birmingham*. Enemy air action slackened considerably during the day. The British L.C.G.s and L.C.F.s were released for overhaul, repairs and training.

18th July—D + 8

Porto Empedocle was opened. The boundaries assigned to the N.C.W.T.F. were abolished by the C.-in-C., Mediterranean, who reassumed control of the area. Convoy movements, landing of supplies, embarkation of casualties and prisoners proceeded satisfactorily.

19th July—D + 9

Attention was devoted to the organization of “follow-up” convoys, as the number of craft provided exceeded the number planned and ships were being turned round faster than anticipated.

20th and 21st July—D + 10 and D + 11

Enemy air activity over the sea area was negligible. The *Brooklyn* rejoined and the *Birmingham* and *Chicopee* were ordered to the U.S.A., the *Boise*, *Savannah* and H.M.S. *Abercrombie* remaining in support of the 7th Army. Many stranded landing craft were reported to be still on the assault beaches.

Rear-Admiral Conolly (C.T.F. 86) prepared to turn over his command to Capt. Doughty, Commander, Advanced Bases, prior to returning to Bizerta.

22nd to 24th July—D + 12 to D + 14

The Army occupied Palermo on the morning of 22nd July. The C.T.G. 80.4 (demonstration group) was ordered to cease diversionary operations. On 24th July, M.T. Bron 15 patrolling off the western entrance to the Straits of Messina sank an enemy supply ship and a small tug. The 45th Infantry Division advancing eastward reached Cefalu on 24th July.